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ABSTRACT

Focusing on the general consumption pattern of ethnic newspapers by Asian-Americans and the underlying attributes of that consumption, a study surveyed 406 randomly selected Asian-Americans (Koreans, Japanese, Chinese, and Filipinos) in the Los Angeles area. The data were analyzed in terms of developmental trends of consumption by years of residence in the United States, and the relationship between demographic and ethnic variables and subscriptions to ethnic newspapers. Findings show that (1) consumption of ethnic newspapers reaches a peak between the twentieth and thirtieth years of living in the United States; (2) each group experiences a different trend in consumption, with Filipinos' consumption peaking in the early stage of immigration and that of the Chinese in the later stage; and (3) age, sex, citizenship, years of residence, and ethnic identification and behavior variables are important in predicting ethnic newspaper subscription. (DF)

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THE CONSUMPTION TREND AND SUBSCRIPTION FACTORS OF ETHNIC NEWSPAPER

-A Study of Asian-Americans in Los Angeles-

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ABSTRACT

This paper explored the general consumption pattern of ethnic newspapers by Asian-Americans and the underlying attributes of that consumption. The study surveyed 406 ramdomly-selected Asian-Americans in the Los Angeles area. The consumption variable was assessed through composite scores using questionnaire items that were tested for reliability, while the subscription to ethnic newspaper was measured at the nominal level. The data were analyzed in terms of (1) developmental trends of consumption by "years of residence in the U.S.", and (2) relationship between demographic and ethnic variables and subscription to ethnic newspapers. The result of the data analyses were compared to the findings from previous studies of Asian-Americans and to the theoretical basis of the acculturation process.

1. Introduction

It is said that perhaps the most important single characteristic of the ethnic press has been its high mortality. For example, Taft and Robinson(1955) reported that in the United States between 1884 and 1920, 3,444 new ethnic newspapers started and 3,186 were discontinued. Recently, however, mass communication scholars have paid increasing attention to ethnic minority mass media behavior. Several factors may be accounted for this increasing attention. First, the contemporary growth of ethnic mass media in terms of their size and operational magnitude, reflecting cultural pluralism and the resurgence of ethnicity, was unexpected to mass communication scholars and some sociologists because of the traditionally the low survival rate of ethnic mass media. Hur(1981), for example, noted that the growth of ethnic-language or ethnic-oriented mass media, especially in the field of broadcasting, has become a major challenge to both commercial and public broadcasters. Second, ethnic mass media have played important roles for intercultural and ethnic communication in influencing an immigrants' acculturation process(Kim, 1977; Kim, 1979, Ryu, 1978). Among these particular studies, Kim's study(1979) is noticeable. He found that in the later stage of immigration, ethnic communication activity was an important factor for "de-culturative" communication orientation. Third, it is assumed that ethnic mass media are a most powerful means of integrating and sustaining the ethnic community by informing geographically

dispersed immigrants whose ethnic solidarity largely depends upon a strong identification with the homeland. In that sense, without ethnic mass media, it would be difficult for a nonterritorial community to exist(Janowitz, 1967).

The purpose of the present study was to examine the consumption pattern of Asian-Americans in the area of ethnic newspapers and to find the factors accounting for consumption. Despite an increasing concern about ethnic mass media, little is known about the consumption pattern of ethnic newspaper with the eclipse of attachment to homeland culture as well as relative contribution of different demographic and structural dimensions to the consumption. Lyle(1968) noted that ethnic mass media exist for the unassimilated ethnic whose life still centers around ethnic enclaves in many neighborhood. Jeffries and Hur(1979) also noted that ethnic mass media use is positively related to ethnicity measures such as ethnic identification, ethnic neighborhoods, membership and activity in ethnic organizations, and observance of ethnic customs. In essence, the use of ethnic mass media is related to the ethnicity. However, few studies examined the definite end of the consumption of ethnic mass media and the factors for that consumption. Kim(1977) analyzed trends in Korean immigrants' communication pattern in relation to acculturation. She found that Korean immigrants' consumption of American mass media steadily increases over the years, while their use of Korean mass media decreases continuously. However,

generalization of Kim's finding to Asian-American cause some limitations since she used only one ethnic group. There are several cultural and historical variations among the Asian-Americans. While Korean immigrants have been in the United States generally less than 20 years, Japanese American have been here more than three generations. In addition, different cultural and social contexts such as religion, the formation of ethnic community, the degree of assimilation and demographic characteristics would lead to different consumption pattern of ethnic mass media. In summary, her findings could not picture the overall consumption pattern of Asian-Americans. The present investigation, therefore, focuses on the general consumption pattern of ethnic newspaper by Asian-Americans and the underlying attributes of that consumption. More specifically, the present study attempts to answer the following set of research questions: What are the trends of consumption patterns of ethnic newspaper by Asian- Americans ? If the consumption of ethnic mass media declines with the passage of time, when is the peak point in that trend? What demographic , socioeconomic and ethnic individual and group characteristics contribute to the subscription to ethnic newspapers? Is there any variation of those contribution factors for consumption among the different Asian-American groups?

2. Method and Procedure

2.1 Asian Community

While the total U.S. population grew only 11.4% in the 1970s, the number of Asians in the United States more than doubled to 3.5 million, the Census data reports.[1] A major factor contributing to this Asian population increase is due to the 1965 Immigration Act. Among the survey groups, Koreans increase the fastest 412.8%, to 354,529. The Chinese had an 85% gain, to 806,027. Filipino increased 211%, to 774,640 and the Japanese grew only 19% to 700,747. Three out of five Asians live in the West, one-third of them in California.

In the Los Angeles area where the present data were collected, it is easy for Asian-Americans to access ethnic mass media, although there is a variation among the four Asian groups in the scope of ethnic media availability. There is at least one daily newspaper published in the Los Angeles area for each of the four groups. Examples include: Joong-Ang Ilbo and Hankook Ilbo in the Korean community; Rafu Shimpo and Kashu Mainich in the

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[1] U.S. Department of Commerce, 1980 Census of Population, Supplementary Report: Race of the Population by States, 1980, PC80-S1-3 [Washington, D.C.: Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce, July 1981]. Although Census of Asian population has been widely used in many academic field, the point we must make here is that the Report severely underestimated the minority population in general because of their estimation based on surname.

Japanese community; American Chinese News and Chinese Newspaper in the Chinese community; Asian American News in the Filipino community. The circulation of each ranges from 15,000 to 80,000. In addition, there is a television station for each of the four groups, although the size of their operations is relatively small compared to typical U.S. television stations. Most of the newspapers are composed of an "original edition" from the home country and an"American edition." The newspapers generally allot space to five categories: U.S. news, home-country news, community news, international news, and metropolitan news. Kim(1983) found that they generally tend to devote more space to community-oriented news rather than any other news.

There is a variation of immigration history among the four group. While Koreans have the shortest history, the Japanese are generally in the third or fourth generation stage. However, assimilation is not necessarily as complete as for those groups who came to the United States before the twenty century. The slowness of their assimilation process is assumed due to the phenomenon known as the "middleman minority"[2], Bonacich(1973),

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[2] The idea of middleman minorities was developed from the observation that several minorities around world, such as Jewish in Europe and Asians in the U.S. They played a particular economic role in the society, that of go between dominant and subordinate elements of society. Their concentration in middleman economic activities appeared to reinforce their social isolation as a distinctive, and sometimes persecuted minority. More detailed discussions about the idea have been made in Blalock(1967

and Kitano(1976)'s studies.) in ethnic studies.

2.2 Sampling

Data for the study were taken from the survey research directed by Dr. Kyoon Hur and Susan Proudlove(1981). The Los Angeles area was chosen as the site of the survey and it included a sample of 1,916 Asian-American residents of that city, [illegible] were selected by use of a multiple-stage probability sample procedure.

Questionnaires were mailed at various times during the summer of 1981. A total of 406 people returned the questionnaire with a response rate of 27 percent. A careful interpretation should be exercised due to the somewhat low response rate. The 406 respondents consisted of four Asian-American groups, of which 88 were Chinese, 83 Filipino, 151 Japanese, and 84 Korean. Except the Filipino group, the sample represented a broad range of people in terms of their demographic and socioeconomic characteristics.

2.3 Dependent Variables

The dependent variable was either the amount of ethnic newspaper consumption or subscription to the newspaper. A summated scale for ethnic newspaper consumption was constructed to account for both number of newspapers read and frequency of exposure to each. Every newspaper listed by a respondent was ranked according to the following scale: 4=every day, 3=two to three times a week, 2= once a week, and 1=less often. Scores for

each newspaper read were added to yield an indicator of a respondents' degree of ethnic newspaper consumption(alpha= .87). The consumption scale was used as an dependent variable corresponding to the changes of length of stay in the U.S., the dependent variable, to examine the trend of ethnic newspaper consumption. For further exploratory study to find factors predicting subscription to ethnic newspaper, the subscription to the newspaper was measured at the nominal level: either one was a subscriber or not.

2.4 Independent Variables

Although trends in ethnic newspaper consumption should be examined through time-series data collected over the long period, the trends were inferred through cross-sectional comparison, based on the length of stay in the U.S.(See Table 1).

Insert Table(1) around here

The method was a reasonable alternative which approximated the longitudinal surveys(Babbie, 1973). Therefore, the length of stay in the U.S. was used as an independent variable to analyze the consumption trends of ethnic newspaper.

In order to search for factors to predict ethnic newspaper subscription, several variables that related to socioeconomic , demographic and ethnicity variables were

Table 1: Overall Frequency Grouped by Length of Stay of Asian-American

Length of Stay (in Years)	Frequency	Percentage
0.0 - 5.0	73	28.8%
5.1 - 10.0	72	28.5%
10.1 - 15.0		14.6%
15.1 - 20.0	27	10.7%
20.1 - 30.0	28	11.1%
30.1 - 98.0	16	6.3%
Total	N =253	100.0%

examined. These included the following, measured at interval level: age(in years), length of stay in the U.S.(in years), education(in years), income(in dollars). Two ethnicity variables -- psychological and behavioral aspect of ethnicity -- were constructed to account for both the degree of psychological attachment to each ethnic group and the degree of behavior observation of original homeland culture. The present study employed seven items for psychological indicators of personal orientation toward Asian cultures. Alpha reliability score among the items was .78.[3] The behavioral aspect of ethnicity was measured by indicators of Asian cultural orientation such as Asian language proficiency, the number of close Asian friends, Asian customs followed(Alpha= .79). In addition, the following categorical variables were used and dummy-coded for the analysis: sex of respondent(0=male, 1=female), U.S. birth(0=non-U.S. birth, 1=U.S. birth).

Since ethnic newspaper subscribership was a categorical dependent variable, a discriminant model was developed. The analysis used the SPSS DISCRIMINANT subprogram(Nie, et al, 1975).

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[3] The scale for ethnic identification yielded an overall score based on adding of a respondent's rankings of seven items about ethnic and American culture: for instance, "I prefer Asian to American culture" and "I want my children to see themselves as Americans." The direction of question toward two cultures set differently item by item to avoid directionality of questionnaire. Some items were reversed during analysis so that higher scores reflected greater ethnic identity

Since the subscription rate was unknown before the analysis, either subscriber or non-subscriber were considered as having equal probabilities.

3. Results

Results of the trend analysis are reported in the following section in terms of (1)general shape of changes over the time, (2)overall significance test of difference across six subgroups which were divided by the length of stay, and (3)significance of trends which partioned the between-groups sum of square into linear, quadratic, or higher-order trend components.

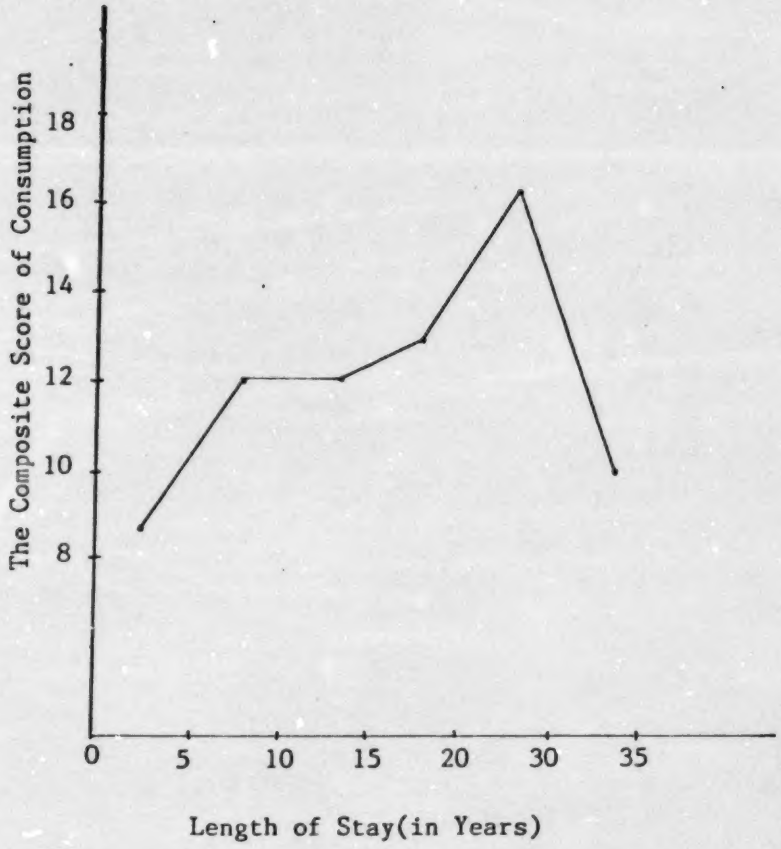
3.1 Trends in Overall Asian-American Groups

The overall test of differences across six subgroups was significant and the test of trend showed that linear and quadratic trends were significant(See Figure 1).

The trend in Asian-American's consumption of ethnic newspaper, based on the composite score of frequency of read and subscription, showed the following shape.

Insert Figure(1) around here

During the first five years, the consumption progressed until it met a plateau which meant that there was no consumption difference for another five years. However, it started to progress again. Then it reaches peak when Asian group's length of stay was between twenty and thirty years. After that the trend turned downward abruptly.



Analysis of Variance

F = 3.91, p = .002

Test of Linear Term

F = 8.77, p = .003

Test of Quadratic Term

F = 5.38, p = .021

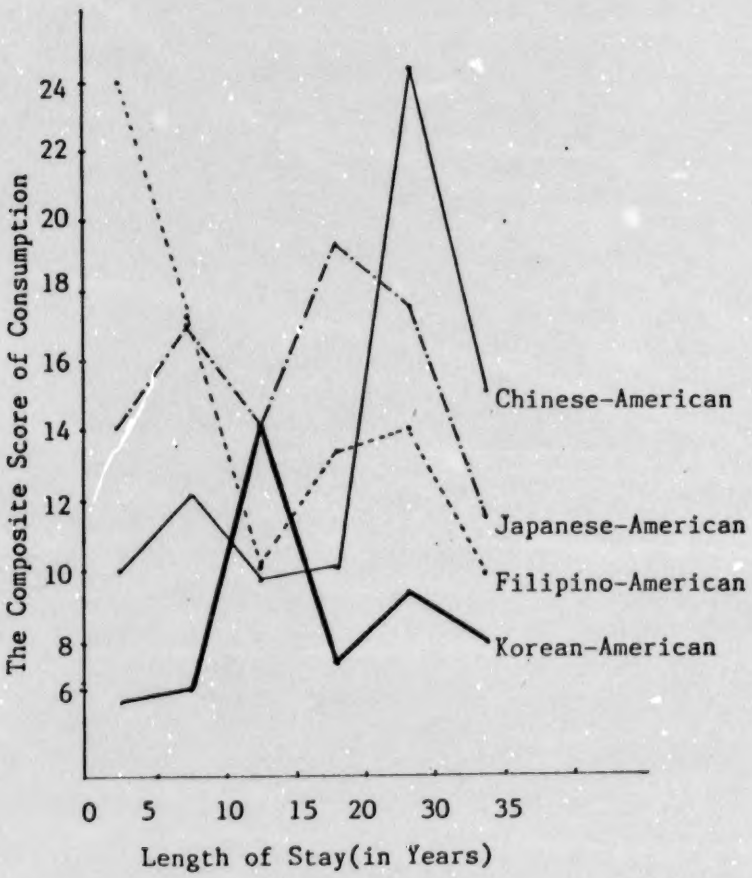
Figure 1: Trend in Consumption of Ethnic Newspaper by Asian-American

3.2 Trends in Consumption by each of Asian Groups

The trends of consumption of each groups varies according to the length of stay in the United States. Test of differences across subgroups and of linearity were significant for Chinese and Filipino groups. Only analysis of variance was significant for Korean group (See Figure 2).

Insert Figure (2) around here

One of the first things that must be pointed out is that Japanese group consumed the greatest amount of ethnic newspaper during all the stages of their stay in the U.S.(score = 15.1), while Korean group consumed the smallest amount(score = 8.7). Following Japanese group were the Chinese(score = 13.6) and Filipino(score = 13.1) groups. The amount of consumption of Filipino group has been the highest in their early stage of their stay in the U.S., then it started to decline continuously, while the the other three groups' consumption progressed until they met the slope whose direction is negative. In general, the Chinese group's consumption pattern looked upward continuously toward the vertex, corresponding to the 20-30 years stay in the U.S. The culmination of Chinese is more impressive than any other groups; its consumption score recorded the highest point in Figure (2). A point of sameness in trend of consumption of Asian groups is, regardless of each group, that the trend turned downward after the 20-30 years stay.



Chinese-American:

Analysis of Variance -- F = 3.816, p = .002

Test of Linear Term -- F = 14.253 p = .000

Filipino-American:

Analysis of Variance -- F = 2.732 p = .029

Test of Linear Term -- F = 3.981 p = .051

Korean-American:

Analysis of Variance -- F = 2.761 p = .018

Figure 2: Trend in Each Group's Consumption of Ethnic Newspaper

3.3 Discriminant Analysis

A further attempt was made to examine the factors of subscription to ethnic newspaper. Based on 396 respondents, the discriminant analyses were computed(See Table 2).

Insert Table (2) around here

The overall analysis was significant($p < .000$) with 21.8 percent of the variance explained. 72.5 percent of the cases classified correctly with the use of this model. Six of the total variables had significant coefficient($p < .05$): age, sex, citizenship, years of residence in the U.S., ethnic identification and ethnic behavior. The" Years of residence" variable had the largest standardized coefficient among them; the longer stay in the U.S., the less likely one is to subscribe to ethnic newspaper. Next is the "ethnic behavior" variable. Those persons who were male or having citizenship or older persons are variables related to higher ethnic newspaper subscription. Not surprisingly, the persons who has ethnic identification and ethnic behavior were more likely to subscribe to ethnic newspaper. Ethnic behavior variable accounted for greater variance than ethnic identification did.

A further discriminant analysis was attempted to examine the factors predicting the subscription to each ethnic newspaper. The overall analysis for each group was not significant except

Table 2:

Discriminant Analysis of Ethnic newspaper Subscription With Demographic and Ethnic Variables

Variables	F[a]	Unstandardized Coefficient	Standardized Coefficient	Means	
				Non-Subscriber	Subscriber
Age	7.52[b]	.023	.416	40.82	46.69
Sex	5.35[b]	- .327	- .156	.45	.32
Citizenship	13.04[b]	.629	.292	.18	.38
Education	.16	- .166	- .229	4.84	4.78
Income	2.81	- .082	.178	5.36	5.79
Years of U.S. Residence	21.91[b]	- .014	- .569	55.30	32.58
Ethnic Identification	22.81[b]	.034	.275	23.10	27.69
Ethnic Behavior	31.32[b]	.087	.418	6.86	10.07

Overall Analysis: Wilk's Landa = .82126(Variance Explained = 21.8 Percent); Group Centroids: -.858, .252; $X^2 = 76.80$, $p < .000$ (df = 8)

[a]Degree of Freedom for All Fs: 396

[b] $p < .05$, Two-tail Test

for the Chinese group. Five of the variables had significant($p < .05$) standardized coefficients for the Chinese group: age(S.C= -.361), sex(S.C.= .416), the length of residence in the U.S.(S.C= .611), ethnic identification(S.C= -.669) and ethnic behavior(S.C= -.057). Most interesting, perhaps, is that the direction of all significant coefficients of the Chinese group showed the opposite direction of those of overall Asian-American discriminant function. The reason might be found in the trend analysis of each group's consumption (See Figure 2);the Chinese group's amount of consumption reached peak at the later stage of immigration, while the other groups were in the downward stage of consumption at the same time. In addition, unlike the findings of overall Asian-American group, the Chinese-Americans, with lower ethnic identification, were more likely to subscribe to ethnic newspapers.

4. Discussion

This paper has attempted to explore the trend of ethnic newspaper consumption and the factors which predict ethnic newspaper subscription. While it was exploratory in nature, it did suggest some interesting findings. The major findings from the data analyses are discussed below.

First, the findings of the present study about trend analysis run counter to those offered by Kim(1977). The present study found that the consumption of ethnic newspapers reached a peak during the years of between 20 and 30 of stay in the U.S., then it turned downward. This was different from Kim's(1977) finding that immigrant's use of ethnic media gradually decreased. The conflicting result partly is accounted for by the different stay of residence ranges included in each study and the different measure of interval as a subgroup. Above all, the discrepancy between two studies might derived from the sampling. Kim generalized from a specific ethnic sample, while the present study utilized data from four representative Asian-American groups. In addition, the findings of this study conflicted with Kim's theoretical assumptions about acculturation process. According to Kim, communication and acculturation are inseparable processes and that a person's communication patterns are indicators of his acculturation level. Therefore, she measured mass media behavior of Asian immigrants as an index of acculturation level and concluded that the longer one is in the

U.S., the more acculturated they becomes. But the trend analysis of the present study suggests different relationships. The study shows that the process of acculturation is not linear but curvilinear, implying that the longer one is the in the U.S., the less acculturated they becomes until a certain time, then the reverse process is true after that time. Also the finding of the present study suggests the very future of ethnic newspaper as a business needs to offer a change in the style and content, such as English version newspaper and more community-oriented edition, when the primary subscription population has been in the U.S. between 20 and 30 years.

Second, each group showed a different trend of consumption. For example, the Filipino group's consumption has been the highest in the early stage of immigration, while the Chinese group has been the highest in the later stage. There were no peculiar shapes for Korean and Japanese groups. Perhaps one possible explanation for this different pattern might be reflected by the degree of acculturation and assimilation into the host society of each group, since the demographic characteristics were controlled by the preliminary analysis. The persistence of ethnic newspaper subscription of the Chinese group at the later stage of immigration may be interpreted by the typical "middleman minority" based on strong community solidarity. On the other hand, since the Filipino group did not have difficulty in English, it is possible for them to replace

the ethnic newspaper with a host newspaper.

Third, age, sex, citizenship, years of residence in the U.S., ethnic identification and ethnic behavior variables were important to predict the subscription of ethnic newspaper. The findings suggested different aspects of subscription factors compared to host newspaper subscription. Age, sex and length of stay in the community were not significant factors for host newspaper subscription(Williams and Linsay, 1971; Shaw, 1978; Stamm et al., 1977), while the present study did suggest the importance of these demographic variables. More important, the most significant variable which predicted subscription of ethnic newspaper was ethnic behavior of respondents. A study by Hur and Proudlove(1982) was generally consistent with the result of the present research, implying the ethnic newspaper can survive as far as ethnic behaviors exist. Also, the positive relationship between ethnic behavior and subscription suggests that mass communication behaviors of ethnic minorities are an indicator of the degree of acculturation.

However, the subscription pattern of the Chinese group run counter to the above finding; the lower ethnic identification and ethnic behavior, the more likely one is to subscribe to ethnic newspaper. The case of the Chinese group suggested the alternative way of surviving as an ethnic newspaper without leaning on unassimilated subscribers. Here, future study should

examine the ethnic newspaper in terms of the functions which ethnic newspapers have served for the immigrants whose degree of assimilation is on the side of host society.

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